**Breakout: Building teams to collaborate and innovate – what works and what are the challenges for your team or organisation?**

**This is an opportunity to share good practice and help your table colleagues to explore solutions to their challenges.**

**Let’s try to keep the conversation positive and solution-focused. While we all realise the realities of resource constraints, perhaps we can try to avoid saying “We can’t do it because there is no money”.**

QUESTION 1 – Is collaborating and innovating across boundaries something that your organisation actively promotes? What are the potential benefits? How does the your organisation promote it – e.g. recruiting particular skills, training particular skills, bringing people/parts of the business together? Which boundaries – e.g. across teams, offices, divisions, with other businesses/supply chain partners/adjacent companies?

QUESTION 2 – What has worked or might work in promoting collaborative innovation across teams and boundaries in your organisation? What are the challenges in promoting collaborative innovation?

ISSUES MIGHT INCLUDE:

1. Creating spaces, practices and ways of working to support collaboration across boundaries
2. Ensuring teams and individuals are resourced to work collaboratively
3. Defining or redefining job roles to promote collaborative innovation
4. Getting buy-in and making the case for collaborative innovation

**QUESTION 2 PROMPTS**

**a) What spaces, practices and ways of working have worked or could work in your organisation or team to support collaborative innovation? What would the challenges be? What has or might work in your organisation and what are the challenges?**

PROMPTS:

Ideas from the research evidence include:

* Create a shared language and understanding of the nature of the problem/objective and the need for collaboration to find new solutions.
* Create ‘shared projects’ (focused, inter-team collaboration) as a business as usual approach to the development and delivery of solutions/
* Create shared collaborative ‘spaces’ – times and (virtual or real) spaces for people to work in a dedicated way on collaborative project-based problem solving.
* Create opportunities for teams to learn about each other’s functions and strategic priorities by attending communication sessions, web postings/web forums.
* Create opportunities for teams to learn about each other’s jobs, skills and contribution by facilitating job shadowing, job rotation or taster experiences.
* Bring groups together to ask questions of each other about each other’s priorities and assumptions. What do you think about and know about the work of each other’s teams?
* Create physical or virtual spaces where people and ideas are funnelled together. e.g. virtual fishbowls where new ideas are openly shared across teams and experimentation is permitted.
* Ensure that different groups/teams are able/encouraged to navigate any creative tensions – ‘learning from difference’/sharing different perspectives facilitates innovation, but can also be a source of tension. There is a need to ensure that we have a common language that frames creative tensions in a positive way.
* Ensure that there are systems (virtual or through teams or communication structures) through which people at all levels can get their ideas/solutions ‘heard’ and, if appropriate, actioned… And that ideas don’t get ‘shot down’ before they have had a chance to be heard.

**b) The evidence suggests that effective ‘boundary spanning’ for collaborative innovation requires resources. What has or might work in your organisation and what are the challenges?**

PROMPTS:

* How can we ensure that resources such as protected time are available for boundary spanning across teams? If individuals are constantly called back to their core ‘home’ team’s day-to-day activities, then progress will be frustrated.
* How can we manage resource imbalances between different individuals/teams represented in boundary spanning collaborations? Different teams/groups or levels of the organisation may have different time/resources to contribute, possibly undermining trust and collaboration.
* How can we help people from different teams to understand the resources (skills, expertise, technology) available elsewhere in the organisation (or in other organisations)? Is there value in supporting ‘resource probing’ activities – i.e. allowing the time, space and permission to probe what’s happening in other teams and/or organisations?

**c) The evidence suggests that sometimes we need to define new job roles or redefine jobs to support collaborative innovation. What has or might work in your organisation and what are the challenges?**

PROMPTS:

* Do job roles allow for boundary spanning – do key people have the autonomy and resources to take a step back from the frontline and engage in boundary spanning?
* Do job roles allow autonomy and empower people to make connections, share ideas and voice ideas/solutions? How does this work? What are the barriers?
* How can challenges around jobs that are tightly controlled by regulation and KPIs be overcome? Are there some narrowly-focused, performance-focused activities that we should fling out?
* Do individuals and teams have performance targets that highlight the importance of collaboration and innovation? Could this work?
* Or are there challenges in getting teams that are actually pretty autonomous already to buy-in to collaborating across boundaries? Teams are becoming more delayered, decentralised and self-managing, rather than just cross-functional, which makes co-ordinating across boundaries more of a challenge.
* Are there particular challenges in getting public service professionals with a strong sense of professional identity (e.g. medics, social workers) to see things from the point of view of different professional groups?
* What might the benefits and challenges be in creating new leadership roles where people visibly act as boundary spanners, joining up ideas from different teams/team members?
* How can organisations ensure that employees seeking to deliver on their own team’s objectives but also engaging in collaboration for innovation don’t experience overload or conflicting demands?
* How can we ensure that cross-functional boundary spanners are able to manage time demands of day-to-day work and cross-boundary projects?
* How can we create visible and transparent governance for boundary spanning across teams? It is important that one team/individual does not feel victim to a ‘hostile takeover’, so provide clear rules of engagement/decision making and leadership processes.

**d) The evidence suggests that effective collaborative innovation across teams/organisations requires leaders and staff to buy-in to the idea that collaborating is worth their energy and commitment. What has or might work in your teams/organisations and what are the challenges?**

PROMPTS:

* Do your leaders/how can leaders communicate the urgency of action on innovation?
* Any good examples of how to champion collaboration and innovation?
* How can leaders communicate benefits of collaborating to innovate for each individuals’ own team/objectives?
* Can we use social media and other communications to reinforce that collaborative innovation should be ‘business as usual’?